

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRIDGE 00487 011328Z

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SUBJ: DOMINICA LABOUR PARTY RETURNED TO POWER BY LANDSLIDE
VICTORY

REF: BTN 0464

SUMMARY: THE RULING DOMINICA LABOUR PARTY GAINED A LANDSLIDE
VICTORY IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS HELD MARCH 24. THE DLP WON 16
SEATS IN THE 21-SEAT HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. CANDIDATES FROM DOMI-
NICA'S THREE OPPOSITION PARTIES AS WELL AS INDEPENDENTS FARED
BADLY IN TUESDAY'S VOTING. THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY, THE
DOMINICA FREEDOM PARTY, WON ONLY THREE SEATS WHILE THE REMAINING
TWO SEATS WERE WON BY INDEPENDENTS. THE CARIBBEAN FEDERAL PARTY
AND THE PROGRESSIVE LABOUR PARTY FAILED TO WIN ANY SEATS. VOTER
TURNOUT IN THE ELECTION WAS HEAVY AND THE ELECTIONS WERE CONDUCTED
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PAGE 02 BRIDGE 00487 011328Z

IN A FAIR AND HONEST MANNER. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DOMINICA LABOUR PARTY (DLP), LED BY PREMIER PATRICK R. JOHN, HAS BEEN RETURNED TO POWER, WINNING A SURPRISING LANDSLIDE VICTORY IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS HELD MARCH 24. DLP WON 16 SEATS IN THE 21-SEAT DOMINICAN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, THUS GAINING AN IMPRESSIVE MANDATE TO GOVERN DOMINICA FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. VOTING WAS DESCRIBED AS HEAVY WITH 80 PERCENT OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS TURNING OUT AT THE POLLS. THE ONLY TWO CANDIDATES RUNNING OUT OF EIGHT DLP MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE ELECTED IN 1970, PREMIER JOHN AND EDUCATION MINISTER H.L. CHRISTIAN, RETAINED THEIR SEATS. AMONG THE MORE PROMINENT NEWLY ELECTED DLP MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE ARE FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE EUSTACE H. FRANCIS, MICHAEL DOUGLAS, AND DLP VICE PRESIDENT J. OLIVER SERAPHINE.

2. DOMINICA OPPOSITION PARTIES AND INDEPENDENTS, THOUGH THEY REPORTEDLY WON 45 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE, FARED POORLY WITH RESPECT TO HOUSE SEATS. THE DOMINICA FREEDOM PARTY (DFP), THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY, WON ONLY THREE SEATS. (ANOTHER DFP CANDIDATE LOST BY ONLY SIX VOTES ON A RECOUNT.) OPPOSITION LEADER IN THE HOUSE ANTHONY MOISE AND NEWCOMER A. ANTHONY CASIMIR WON SEATS AS EXPECTED, BUT FORMER MEMBER OF THE HOUSE R. STANLEY FADELLE WAS DEFEATED IN AN UPSET VICTORY BY DLP CANDIDATE LUKE CORNETTE. UNOFFICIAL LEADER OF THE DFP MISS M. EUGENIA CHARLES WON A SURPRISE VICTORY OVER HER DLP OPPONENT BY A LARGE MARGIN OF 200 VOTES. MISS CHARLES IS LIKELY TO BE NAMED OPPOSITION LEADER IN THE HOUSE DESPITE MOISE BEING RETURNED TO THE HOUSE.

3. THE PROGRESSIVE LABOUR PARTY (PLP) FAILED TO WIN EVEN ONE SEAT DESPITE ITS HAVING BEEN HEAVILY FAVORED TO WIN AT LEAST TWO OF THE EIGHT SEATS IT WAS CONTESTING. BOTH PLP CHAIRMAN JENNER B.M. ARMOUR AND CARIB INDIAN CHIEF MACCLEM C. FREDERICK LOST THEIR RACES TO THEIR RESPECTIVE DLP OPPONENTS, RANDOLPH BANNIS AND LAWRENCE DARROUX. DARROUX IS THE FIRST CARIB INDIAN EVER ELECTED TO THE DOMINICAN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. PLP FOUNDER RONALD O.P. ARMOUR, FORMER LEBLANC PROTEGE AND DEPUTY PREMIER, LOST HIS DEPOSIT IN THE RACE FOR THE NEWTOWN SEAT WON BY THE DLP'S FRANCIS.

4. AS PREDICTED, THE CARIBBEAN FEDERAL PARTY LIKEWISE FAILED TO WIN A SEAT.

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PAGE 03 BRIDGE 00487 011328Z

5. INDEPENDENTS ALSO FARED POORLY AS ONLY TWO OF THE ELEVEN RUNNING WON SEATS. PATTISON "PAT" A.S. STEVENS AND CONRAD W. CYRUS WERE ELECTED TO THE HOUSE AS EXPECTED, BUT OTHER INDEPENDENTS REGARDED AS STRONG CANDIDATES, FOR EXAMPLE, ALLEGED MND MEMBER ELOI SYLVESTER AND UNION LEADER CHARLES A. SAVARIN WERE DEFEATED BY THEIR DLP OPPONENTS, MICHAEL DOUGLAS AND ROMANUS BANNIS.

6. MOST DOMINICANS, ACCORDING TO THE EDITOR OF THE DOMINICAN WEEKLY NEW CHRONICLE, WERE SURPRISED BY THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS. UNTIL THE ACTUAL VOTING ON MARCH 24, THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS WAS HIGHLY UNCERTAIN AND IT WAS WIDELY BELIEVED THEY COULD RESULT EITHER IN A DLP VICTORY OR IN THE OPPOSITION WINNING ENOUGH SEATS TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT. MOST SEATS WERE HOTLY CONTESTED AND, REPORTEDLY (ALL THE STATISTICS ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY), A MAJORITY OF THE CONTESTS WERE DECIDED BY MARGINS OF LESS THEN 100 VOTES. THE NEW CHRONICLE EDITOR BELIEVES THE RESULTS OF ELECTIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS FAVORABLE TO DLP IF 18-YEAR-OLDS, VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME, HAD REGISTERED IN LARGER NUMBERS. THE ELECTIONS WERE CONSIDERED TO BE FAIRLY AND HONESTLY CONDUCTED DESPITE CHARGES BY BOTH THE DLP AND DFP THAT THEIR SUPPORTERS ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTY IN VOTING BECAUSE VOTER LISTS WERE OFTEN INCOMPLETE.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE NEW DOMINICAN CABINET HAS NOT YET BEEN NAMED, IT IS EXPECTED THAT PREMIER JOHN WILL ANNOUNCE ITS FORMATION SHORTLY. SPECULATION IS THAT HE WILL PICK HIS CABINET FROM AMONG SEVEL DLP MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE. H.L. CHRISTIAN MAY RETAIN THE ECDUCATION PORTFOLIO OR BE DROPPED FROM THE CABINET. EUSTACE K. FRANCES MAY BE GIVEN EITHER THE HOME AFFAIRS OR FINANCE MINISTRY BOTH OF WHICH JOHN CURRENTLY HOLDS. MICHAEL DOUGLAS SEEMS TO BE IN LINE FOR THE AGRICULTURAL PORTFOLIO WHILE VICTOR RIVIERE, HALF-BROTHER OF MND LEADER DR. WILLIAM "PARA" RIVIERE, MAY BE NAMED FINANCE MINISTER. OTHERS WHO MAY RECEIVE CABINET POSTS ARE J. OLIVER SEREPHINE, EDEN BOWERS, AND FERDINAND F. PARILLON. SPECULATION IS ALSO RIFE THAT THE RULING DLP WILL CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION NOW THAT IT HAS MORE THAN A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF MINISTERS, CURRENTLY LIMITED TO FIVE.
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